

“COGNITIVE DISSONANCE”

A CREATIVE FILM THESIS

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of the College of Graduate Studies and Research

Angelo State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

by

HENRY MAHOME

December 2018

Major: Communication

“COGNITIVE DISSONANCE”

A CREATIVE FILM THESIS

by

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Dr. Susan E. Keith                      Date  
Dean, College of Graduate Studies and Research

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## ABSTRACT

Mahome, Henry. "*Cognitive Dissonance*." Master of Communication, August 2018, Cognitive Dissonance is a creative, short film based upon the Standpoint Theory and cross cultural communication. This film explores cross cultural communication between a police officer and a black male who has a fixed, negative perspective of police. The purpose of this film is to correlate the study of police brutality against black Americans portrayed in the media with discourse through cross cultural communication a police officer and a black American. The research argues that cultural identity and world view directly reflect representation in media. This research also explains culture, Standpoint Theory, and how the media representations of black youth and police interactions have strained their relationships. The film acts as an interpretation of entertainment education about cross cultural communication. *Cognitive Dissonance* poses an idea of a relationship that can begin through cross cultural communication. Understanding Standpoint Theory and cultural representation, cross cultural communication is possible as well as steps towards productive communication between effected communities and their law enforcement.

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## SHEET 1 / 1

Date 6 / 9 / 2018

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**(Figure 2)**



Production Title Cognitive Dissonance Director Henry Mahome Location Corner Store Date 6 / 24 / 2018

Director Henry Mahome

Location Corner Store

Date 6 / 24 / 2018[illegible]

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**(Figure 3)**



## CAMERA SHOT LIST

Production Title Cognitive Dissonance Director Henry Mahome Location Parking Garage Date 6 / 26 / 2018

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Title: Cognitive Dissonance  
Medium: HD Video  
Video Length: 20 minutes

## **INTRODUCTION AND DESCRIPTION**

My first interaction with a police officer occurred when I was thirteen. I was in middle school and on this particular morning, I was tired and irritated more than usual. I was being dropped off to school along with my brother, like most mornings, in front of the band hall. As I get to the door, I feel a smack at the top of my head. I coil, and turn around to laughter and my best friend takes off. I reach for the crown of my head softly brushing it and pull my hand down. I glance at my hand now full of flour. From the distance I hear "you got all that powder in your head!" I was embarrassed, full of rage, and felt the only course of action was to chase him down. However, I am not a violent person, never have been. I knew I wanted to catch him, I just had no idea what I would do to him once I caught him but that was not important at that moment. I chased him down, angry and at full speed. Once I finally caught him, I pinned him against the wall before I could think of what I should do, I am surrounded by students all of whom feel that there is a fight in progress. Suddenly, I am grabbed from behind and thrown against the wall. Instinctively, I jerked away because I am not sure who it is. Once he began to speak, it was abundantly clear who he was; it was the campus officer assigned to Kirby Middle School. In a matter of seconds, I am riddled with profanity and swung around, as he tries to trip me to throw me to the ground, I keep my balance which makes it worse. Still surrounded by an even bigger crowd at this point, I am swung to the floor with a knee in my back as handcuffs are aggressively forced on my wrists. The officer, more than twice my size, picks me up from the concrete and trails me through a crowd of my peers, classmates, and teachers. I am humiliated. Not only is it as if everyone decided to come to school that morning to watch me this precise

moment but I feel like a criminal, I have a large clump of flour in the middle of my head, my clothes are tattered and dirty and I am crying. "Is this what police do to people like me?" I think to myself, "or am I a criminal?" As far as I can think, I have not done anything to warrant that aggressive behavior to that extent. I tried to explain myself to the vice principal but was ultimately suspended that day in addition to being put in in-school-suspension for three days.

As a result of this experience during my adolescence, I had a skewed perception of authority. There were times after that where I would do things with an understanding that those in authority did not care, understand, or care to understand where I was coming from. Or if they did it would not matter, I would still receive punishment I felt was unjustified; because it was their job to do so. With police, however, it felt universal with those my age who looked like me. I was a weird kid but one thing I could relate to others was my choice in music, the video games I played, the TV show and films I watched, and the negative perception of law enforcement. As a misinformed teenager, I was lost in translation between police and how they were perceived in the entertainment I enjoyed, my own terrifying experience, and who they were and what they were here for. With the help of social influence, I made the police my enemy and did what I could to steer clear of them out of fear. It was clear that there was a communication gap caused within my culture and one negative experience I had. However, if it only takes one negative experience to create a fear and stigma towards an entire culture or profession, I believe the same can be done to build and mend relationships. In order for this to happen it would take cross cultural communication addressing everything that needs to be worked through. In the past five years, there have been news stories and headlines of young unarmed black men killed at the hands of police in the United States. Local and national news stories not only cover the deaths in depth, but also have interviewed the families, and anyone close

to the deceased, continuing the narrative of how police officers mishandled their authority. One example of this is the killing of Stephon Clark in Sacramento, CA. A Washington Post article explained that Stephon Clark, 22, was shot at twenty times and hit by eight of those shots, killing him in his grandmother's back yard. Clark was unarmed, however, the police said they believed he was raising a gun at them, only a white iPhone was found near his body (Horton, 2018). Their mistake cost this man his life. The media has given Clark's brother Stevante attention with interviews on news networks including CNN, CBS News and other platforms asking the same question in one way or another: "How does this make you feel?" It should be very clear how he or anyone in his position should feel after losing a family member to police brutality. In America, especially for African Americans, interactions with police have a lingering traumatic association with fear of mistreatment or death at the hands of police because of the narratives given in our entertainment and media. Each incident, much like Clark's, displayed on the news or on social media platforms are directly attributed to race and calls into question the misuse of authority and power.

Unfortunately, Clark's story and tragic death is not a new one. Many of these incidents are recorded in real time. The death of Stephon Clark was captured on the body cam of the shooting officer and then when released, was published and shown on the websites of CNN, NY Times, LA Times, NPR.org, and Fox News, the footage also aired nationally on stations including CNN and ABC. A similar story happened in the shooting of Philando Castile. While pulled over in a traffic stop, Castile was shot to death in the passenger side of his girlfriend's car with their daughter in the back seat. Castile alerted the officer that he was a licensed gun owner, and while reaching for his license, was shot sixteen times and died on the scene. The entire situation was recorded live on Facebook Live by his girlfriend. Multiple

social media platforms reposted and shared the livestream and national news outlets also shared the footage with their viewers. It could be assumed that black Americans are more likely to die at the hands of the police than any other race by just watching the news, however according to daily statistics provided by TheWashingtonPost.com, this is not true. In fact, as of April 5, 2018, of the 351 deaths by lethal police force in the United States by race, white Americans make up 40 percent of those deaths, while black Americans comprise only 19 percent. Of those that are unarmed deaths, only 2 percent of those were black while 3 percent were white (www.washingtonpost.com, 2018).

Statistically, white Americans die more often at the hands of police than black Americans, then why is it portrayed differently in the media? A simple answer would be the narrative; what happens and why. Race relations in America is currently a choice of topic in the media and has become, one of the most challenging and controversial issues of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Mastro, 2015). Representation, for this reason, is important in steering the narrative that police disproportionately target and kill black people more often than whites. This has the power to move the conversation from racial bias and targeting to an overall abuse of authority by the police. It is a difficult argument to back if the argument is about race because it is harder to prove that police have a racial bias or agenda, however that does not mean it does not exist. Perspective and culture play a role in this understanding. For example, if one is black and watches the news, and sees black people more frequently than whites being killed or mishandled at the hands of police, the perception is that police treat black Americans differently than others.

At the same time, the spokespeople for law enforcement maintain the narrative and stereotype for the cities they police. For example in cities like Chicago and Baltimore where crime rates are high, Kats (2016) argues that spokespeople blame police responses on a

“broken windows,” policing that is missing in cities (Kats, 2016, p.924). The broken windows policy focuses on the importance of disorder in generating and sustaining crimes that are more serious. Disorder is not linked directly to serious crime; instead, disorder leads to increased fear and withdrawal from residents, which then allows more serious crime to move in because of decreased levels of informal social control (www.economist.com, 2015). Kats (2016) also explains that, “The broken windows policy they want reinstated is law enforcement without the Fourth Amendment; it is law enforcement based upon racial profiling; it is law enforcement that gives the police license to violate the law.”(Kats, 2016,p.924) Black communities have the fear that they are being targeted, while law enforcement argues that their actions are just.

In the United States, systemic oppression and discrimination targeting black communities is documented and well known. Kats (2016) points to court cases like Dred Scott saying, “We don’t have to go back to the Dred Scott case in 1857, almost universally thought to be the worst case in the Court’s history, to find the Supreme Court on the side of injustice against blacks” (p.925). Kats (2016) also noted to other significant court cases including Brown v Board of Education (1954), Mapp v Ohio (1961), Baker v Carr (1962), but specifically addressing Whren v United States (1996) to show that systemic racial bias is not a new topic. It is frustrating to see people who look like me, be treated disproportionately negatively by law enforcement. It makes me fear for my own safety anytime I am pulled over.

Representation in these situations is important in my case because if I am constantly shown, in the media, that unarmed black men are shot by the police in “routine” traffic stops, it gives me the impression that it can happen to anyone that looks like me, or ultimately,

me. This is a fear among black youth and especially black parents. Take for instance, the case of Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old boy in Cleveland OH, who was playing with a toy gun in the park near his home when the police were called on him. Within 12 seconds of the police arriving to the scene, he was shot and killed. He was black, not only that he was a child, but the officers perceived that he was as a threat. The high school shooting in Parkland, FL however, had a completely different outcome. The shooter was Nikolas Cruz, a white 19-year-old student who killed 17 of his classmates. When he was found later that day, not far from the school, was arrested and charged. Another comparison is Dylann Roof, the now 24-year-old white male, who shot and killed 9 members of the Charleston Baptist Church in Charleston, SC in 2015. Roof was arrested the next day. The correlation between these three examples, as well as Stephon Clark, is the representation in the media, and the narrative that these individuals were treated differently by the police because of the color of their skin. Milwaukee Bucks player Sterling Brown went to the extent of suing the city of Milwaukee following the way he was treated by the city police in an incident in early 2018. According to ESPN.com (2018), Brown had been talking with officers while waiting for a citation for illegally parking in a disabled spot outside a Walgreens at about 2 a.m. on Jan. 26. Body-camera video shows that Brown never appears to threaten police during his arrest, but officers took him down because he didn't immediately remove his hands from his pockets as ordered. Brown decided to sue the city after he felt that he was discriminated against, "because of his race." Media effects the narrative associated to the value of black people in America. In other words, if one is black, regardless if one is unarmed, regardless of profession or income, one will be treated or seen as a threat by law enforcement and it could cost one's life.

Unfortunately, this is the rhetoric black Americans often see on a recurring basis in media.

It circulates media outlets such as television, social media and is seen in films. Mastro (2015) argues that television (and mainstream media more generally) provides audiences with a highly stable set of messages about racial/ethnic groups, which, over time and repeated exposure, influence audiences' real-world perceptions. Therefore, the more audiences see black Americans harassed and or shot by the police in media, the more they begin to believe it and then live it, thus creating a cycle.

The responses from white America and black America to the issue of police brutality are statistically different. Reinka and Leach (2017) provide research showing that black Americans tend to pay more attention to protest movements (Goidel et al., 2011), have more positive attitudes toward them (Bobo, 1988; Eisinger, 1974), and believe protest to be more legitimate (Rasmussen Reports, 2015) as well as more effective (Eisinger, 1974), than do white Americans (Reinka & Leach, 2017). Social movements such as #BlackLivesMatter have created a voice for young activists on social media spaces expressing this sentiment. There also are those who defend the actions of the police validating the killings of these people because they are either not doing what they were told, breaking the law, or in the wrong place at the wrong time. Social movements defending this side of the argument like #BlueLivesMatter argue that these incidents are not race related and should not be brought into the argument. #BlueLivesMatter, #AllLivesMatter, and other social movements counter the arguments of the Black Lives Matter movement in an attempt to discredit the narrative that there is a race issue in America. #BlueLivesMatter was created as a social movement in defense of police officers who fell in the line of duty. Whatever side of the argument he or she may find themselves on, the discourse is necessary to make social progress. Social progress, empathy, and understanding, is possible through communication. For example, [cops.usdoj.gov](https://cops.usdoj.gov),



a digital newsletter specifically designed for police and community engagement, highlights how police can engage and interact with their community. In one article from the website by C.Cognac (2015), it specifically details how police engagement and conversation with the community they police helps both the police and their community. The Cognac says,

“It’s important that police departments encourage individual officers to establish community relationships and partnerships, and even become community leaders. The support and encouragement from command staff and supervision make a huge difference in an individual officer’s ability and willingness to go above and beyond—to truly be community police officers” (2015).

This subject is one that needs to be addressed in every social medium possible. The more this conversation presents itself, the more voices can be heard, the more personal stories can be told, and ultimately the more problems that can be addressed.

Based on my own experiences, communication is structurally important and the foundation and in the advancement of any relationship. Whether it be with a sibling, friend, significant other, teacher, or mentor, what I have found is that communication is the base of progressing and is a key to human development. Fraser & Villet (1994) said, “Helping people at all levels to communicate empowers them to recognize important issues and find common grounds for action, and builds a sense of identity and participation in order to implement their decisions” (www.fao.org, 1994 ).

Communication Theories should be used outside of academic settings, in less formal spaces. Communication Theory is the branch of knowledge dealing with the principles and methods by which information is conveyed. Although the idea of Communication Theory makes sense in academia, once applied to day-to-day conversations, and

communication styles are recognized, it will be easier to navigate through important conversations. West & Turner(2004) state that communication can be ambiguous but the primary goal is understanding and that communication opportunities fill our lives each day. For instance, the relationship between law enforcement and African American communities, specifically the youth, would benefit if even one party relied on the methods prescribed by relevant communication theories.

There is an obvious disconnect between black youth and police in America because of music, film, and entertainment directed towards black youth. The space of popular culture that is shaped by the African American experience has formed the narrative that police are the enemy. Kendrick Lamar, a rapper from Los Angeles, stated in his song “Alright” from the album *To Pimp A Butterfly* (2015) “...And we hate the Po po, wanna kill us dead in the street fo’ sho.” This is one example of the many examples where a rapper has used his or her platform to express disdain for law enforcement. In their defense, they use their platforms to express how their experience and many teenagers, especially black teenagers have similar experiences. When I was a teenager I was rebellious, it was part of my growing up. I was still trying to find my identity in relation to society including where and how I fit in, so this put me in situations where I had to evaluate who I was. I understood early that being black, I was going to be treated a certain way because of the color of my skin, good or bad, my race has played a significant role in my communication and relationships. My relationship with authority mirrored the music and movies I watched. I did not talk to police because my favorite rappers and characters in movies told me not to. The culture that I saw in films and heard in music taught me that this is who I am and this is my culture. If I was to fit in, I had to follow those rules or, “I was not black”; however, I was never given a

“why.” My pop culture influence, my introduction to black culture portrayed in media, never gave me a definitive reason why I should act the way I acted; it was just for the culture.

The difference in black youth, in respect to other races in America, is the way African Americans are represented in media, more so the spaces they are allowed to be in. For other minorities besides African American culture, gestures in the media can give a nod to their culture by the language, clothing, accents, food, and behavior. These are indicative of their country of origin and their culture. For Latin Americans, when television shows and films create a stereotypical Latina or Latin male, they are shown as a representation of their culture as it relates to American culture. In ABC's *Modern Family*, one of the main characters Sofía Vergara is a great representation of the Latin community. The way she speaks and act is unmistakably Latina. However, her character is not a satirical, or a mockery of her culture. The representation in media creates a narrative of people and their culture the viewers can understand. This can be true for more than Latin culture, but also Asian culture, and other minorities. The difference between these minorities' culture in comparison to Black culture was that slavery stripped black Americans from their native identity, and so black culture was created by the experiences in America. When this is displayed in the media, often times the negative experiences are glorified. The side effect is that, if the viewer identifies with this narrative, they mimic the behaviors; this is referred to as Cultivation Theory. Briefly, Cultivation Theory suggests that high frequency viewers of television are more susceptible to media messages and the belief that they are real and valid. This could explain why I believed the messages I received pertaining to black culture, and why black youth form their self-identities with rappers, and entertainers that are in the media representing “black culture.”

Film is a powerful tool to communicate messages when juxtaposed to communication

theories. There are a variety of styles of filmmaking, when one thinks about why they specifically go to see a movie, there can be a variety of reasons as to what type of film one chooses to watch. Documentaries, animations, comedies, dramas, action films, just to name a few, bring a variety of emotions and information to life, giving audiences a vicarious peek into lives and minds of characters portrayed on screen. Not only does it give space for visual stories, it allows creators to build worlds and tell their truths. The film and media industry attracted me because I could see the effect of what a good story has on others. The ability to create a narrative is an art form that, as a communication method, has the power to motivate people to see the world differently, and to make change. For example, the film *The Thin Blue Line* (1988) helped to release a falsely convicted man accused of murder. The New York Times published an article stating, "After the movie came out in 1988, the resulting outcry prompted a judge to grant another hearing, something Mr. Schaffer had not been able to accomplish. Mr. Harris recanted his previous testimony, without confessing. In 2004, Mr. Harris was executed for the other murder" (Martin, 2011). As a youth, I watched many films as well as television shows because something always caught my attention. I watched a range of programs, including education, entertainment, sports, and even things that were not appropriate for me to watch in my youth. Television and movies had a heavy influence on how I grew up. That could be one reason I picked up a camera in the first place. However, what I recognized early on was the representation of black culture in the media. I learned, "how to be black" from watching movies and television. My representation in media and the things that I have learned about myself and my culture were shown to me through films and television shows. There are certain things that my parents did not teach me that I gained from watching TV sitcoms about black families I would mimic in daily day life. Certain shows and films introduced me to the music I enjoy, the games and

activities that I would practice, and taught me things about black history that was not introduced to me in school. Black sitcoms and films also provided a sense of pride in myself and my culture. This also played a role on my perspective of law enforcement in relation to my culture.

The focus of my undergraduate education was Mass Media with a minor in Film Studies, learning film techniques, theories and methods. I want to infuse this knowledge to start a production company in the future. In my graduate studies in Communication, I have learned multiple communication theories, its overall purpose in contributing to the understanding of human behavior. I gravitated toward theories that deal with culture and intercultural disciplines to understand different methods to explain my personal experiences in hopes to find common ground with those I feel have nothing in common with me. I will use film to illustrate the black cultural perspective, and provide a foundation for conversation around police shootings involving unarmed black men.

I wrote the film Cognitive Dissonance to show the cognitions of a black man leading to a confrontation with a police officer with his understanding of police. The idea was to show standpoints of black men about police and how they feel they are mistreated. Trey represented the vessel, with his own ideas, that would take these thoughts and present them to Officer Daniel to have a discourse about police brutality. A large part of the purpose behind the research, and the film was to understand my fear of confrontation with law enforcement, debunk any myth I knew, and use communication theories to create a solution. My biggest fear is having my life end because of a misunderstanding with a police officer. I am not comfortable around police, and even when I have not done anything illegal, I have an innate feeling of discomfort and

anxiety. It is also frustrating and confusing when citizens who are not black, are outspoken and aggressive towards the police in situations and yet not be seen as a threat. It is a privilege to not have to worry about having a threatening tone of voice when addressing police officers and not fearing the repercussions. It is a privilege to be able to walk down the street comfortably and not fear fitting a description; it should not have to be. As a citizen of the United States, our law enforcement is here to protect us. It is my reality that there is a fear of me and people who look like me; there is a fear that I am a threat because of the color of my skin, and I see no other race, so frequently, evidenced in the media, being killed at the hand of the police. I wrote *Cognitive Dissonance* out of frustration with an attempt to understand how communication methods and theories can be utilized to prevent situations with authorities from escalating. The opportunity to tell a story through a narrative film gives me the chance to show communication as a discourse of cultural misperceptions to confront a fear and productively move forward.

The narrative of *Cognitive Dissonance* is to explore the possibility of intercultural or cross communication between a young black man and a police officer. The purpose of this production is to show the audience that communication creates an opportunity to overcome fears based on cognitions stemmed from our cultural perspectives. Culture helps to identify people, social groups, and relations to a world view. Williams (1958), a cultural theorist, defined culture as “a way of life” (p.325). It is a general definition, however it is important to be vague so that a way of life can expand what is included in the definition of culture. If Williams believes that culture is a way of life, in that respect, cross cultural communication happens daily. People from different cultures and social

groups communicate every day varying from interactions at work, conversations in line at the grocery store, or interactions between commutes. This also means interactions between law enforcement and civilians would serve as an example of cross cultural communication. Rather than finding common ground on misunderstandings or misinterpretations, we take pride in our own beliefs, stand by them, and then those beliefs become who we are. In this film, I want the audience to recognize that our fears create misconceptions about who the perceived “bad guy” is. We are not always right, pride and culture aside, ideas and attitudes that we have been taught can be seen as wrong to someone else.

In Cognitive Dissonance, a young black man, Trey, is struggling to find a balance between his dreams of becoming a successful rapper and supporting his family. He finds himself at gunpoint at the hands of a police officer who believes that Trey is merely running because he is guilty of a crime, not realizing it was merely out of fear. The two characters encounter each other by chance and after a heated discourse, decide to just talk as men. The last scene of the film, when they are both sitting side by side, is meant to signify the growth of each character, while putting them as figurative equals. The film shows Communication Theories that introduce the problem, for example Standpoint theory as the fear of police, and also a solution, Cross Cultural Communication Theory to overcome that fear. This narrative will capture an option of what a conversation that can lead to understanding would look like.

Theories that are the focus of this film include Standpoint Theory, Cognitive Dissonance, and Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm. Standpoint Theory suggests knowledge stems from social position and individual realities are based on perspectives and

experiences (Riger, 1992). Cognitive Dissonance Theory suggests that when people do things that they do not feel fits with what they know, they attempt to change it (Festinger, 1957). If the audience believes that authority figures deserve respect and usually work in a moral, upright fashion, seeing police shoot “unarmed” black men in the media causes dissonance. In their effort to avoid feelings of dissonance, people will avoid hearing views that oppose their own, and seek reassurance. Rather than avoiding the conversation, the film creates a discourse to encourage the importance of cross cultural communication. Walter Fisher’s Narrative Paradigm is the art of storytelling; it is also how humans have communicated messages throughout history (Fisher, 1985). This interpretation of how Standpoint Theory works and how it can be applied in the foundation of cross cultural communication is best told in the form of a narrative film.

It is important to begin the film at a base of understanding, to come full circle in the end. In this film, Standpoint Theory aligns with the perspective of self in relationship with peers, lovers, and authority. The main characters, Trey and Daniel, find their love for sports and their sons as a bonding moment. Daniel speaks about his love for his son during his monologue, Trey also speaks about his son and his fears for his future. The idea of Trey’s fear for his son’s life is based on Standpoint Theory. Standpoint Theory is the foundation for their cross cultural communication. Trey’s standpoint is that his community is targeted, he expresses this view throughout the first and second act. The central concept of Standpoint Theory, according to Nancy Hartstock (1998), is social order. Hartstock (1997) suggests Standpoint Theory points out the problems in social order but also provides new ways of organizing social life. Standpoints are achieved after thought, interaction, and struggle (O’brian Hallstein, 2000). Hartstock (1998) stated that Standpoint



Theory gives the power to the oppressed voice. In this film, Trey symbolizes the oppressed voice.

Trey has conversations about how he feels the police treat people in his community and other African American communities in America. This issue is balanced with his personal struggle, creating a dynamic character. Trey wants to use his rap career to provide but he understands that currently, it is more of a burden than a blessing. Trey is also affected by the police shootings as a young, college-bound friend of his had been a recent victim to one of these tragedies. In the conversation with the victim's brother Kasey in the corner store scene, the built-up anger and hurt is portrayed through Kasey and how he feels about the police, specifically the one who takes his brother's life. It is through the dialogue with Trey, who acts as a positive mentor that Kasey is able to have something to look forward to. Officer Daniel on the other hand, plays the role of authority in the film.

Originally he was meant to be shown as a dynamic character much like Trey, however the story unfolds to be Trey's standpoint. Ultimately, it is Trey who has to develop as a character rather than Daniel. Trey's standpoint makes him fear the police, which puts both Trey and Daniel in the position they are in. Daniel is the authority, but not necessarily the villain. In the film, the police are portrayed as the bad guys, which is depicted early on through the dialogue between Trey and Mike, and then again with Trey and Kasey. This idea that the police are the bad guys, causes Trey to instinctively run away; for fear of his life. Trey explains this in the final scene that he is scared of the police not just for himself, but also for his son, as well as his community. However, in the act of Trey running, Daniel understands his action to be that of someone who is guilty, he

says, “if you are innocent, why would you run? Innocent people don’t run,” furthering his correlation between guilty people and running from the police. It is not until Trey points out that he ran because he was scared that Daniel realizes scope of the situation, this opens up their discourse involving police brutality from Trey’s perspective, and actually being an officer from Daniel’s point of view.

Cognitive dissonance is a result of having a conflict of emotions when one’s actions do not match one’s beliefs. In one part of the story, Trey wants to continue to rap to support his family; however, rapping is not financially supporting his family, but doing the opposite; taking time and money away from them spent in his friend’s music studio. He has to find a job but he does not want to give up rapping to do it. Cognitive dissonance is displayed through Trey’s idea of the police, and that even when he is not doing anything illegal, he should run, but this puts him in even more danger than he would have been had he stayed and explained what he was doing. This confrontation not only allows both perspectives to be heard, but also allows a starting point for Trey to get over his fear of the police, by sitting and having a conversation with Daniel, Trey is able to see him as a regular guy, much like him, and not the bad guy. Although this does not change past history, or future between black Americans and the police in their communities, it serves as an idea or a theory of creating dialogue. *Cognitive Dissonance* will be shot like a cinematic short film in 24fps at 4k. Medium shots, extreme close ups and handheld, over the shoulder shots will be used to capture emotion. Visually, the technique this will set an emotional film. Major parts of the story will be told through non-verbal action and body language, making the sounds of the film and the actors come across as realistically as possible. In Film Studies, the message is impacted by visuals. Jankovic(2011) suggests that film

moves audiences to feel. Jankovic (2011) noted, “Film is elusive, like affect, because it moves: it moves viewers to feel, and it moves in relation to viewers” (p.89).

The visuals of the film will create a mood, with lighting in some moments of action, pacing and rhythm in others. The film will feel natural, as this is a realistic story that could happen. The cinematic inspiration of this film is the urban drama *Kicks* (2016) by Justin Tipping. To the credit of the editors of *Kicks*, the colors were vivid and bold. The audience is able to feel the element and grittiness of the environment of the film; *Cognitive Dissonance* will utilize these same methods so that the environment in this film can give viewers a similar feeling. The audience will view a more intimate connection with the characters and the environment with medium shots and close ups and in post-production, the addition of color will give the audience a more personal relationship to the environment created. The conversations will feel more personal especially in key moments.

In filming, each character will be proportionately framed with each other on screen to stand out to illustrate the subject but fit within the scenes framing. In medium shots and medium close ups, the characters will be framed tightly within the rule of thirds leaving little to no head room during scenes of dialogue so the audience can be focused on the words and facial expressions. This is important for the audience to understand the messages in the film coming from the supporting cast in dialogue with Trey especially leading up to the final scene. The film is written to be character-driven but also have a sense of environmental storytelling, where some shots will be built with no characters in the frame. As Trey gains a sense of understanding of his responsibility to his family, the conflict arrives just as he feels he has found a workable compromise of supporting his family and his dream. The audience will feel empathy for Trey, and it sets a

platform for understanding his frustration to this point. The world that is built will seem familiar, the characters relatable, and the setting will take place in modern time.

Although this is a narrative, the film should be realistic and believable. *Cognitive Dissonance* explores three things from a scholarly perspective: culture, cross cultural communication and, Standpoint Theory. The term cognitive dissonance brings these ideologies together. In order to dissect the film's purpose and message, it is important that these ideologies are clarified as to how they work, and emphasized in the film.

## STANDPOINT THEORY

Standpoint Theory takes a group's beliefs and uses it as grounds for their arguments. Standpoint Theory is an entry point for understanding the anger of Trey in the film. Every day people provide the framework for Standpoint Theory (West & Turner, 2004, p.462). Trey sees the world from the position of a historically oppressed people. His anger comes from the examples of misuse of power demonstrated by the police in his community. In the film, Trey was emotionally involved due to the situation with the officer that shot Kane and how it was handled. His understanding of the situation causes him to question whether the police in his city were there to protect him, or to protect people from him. Standpoint Theory claims people's experiences, knowledge, and communication behaviors are shaped in large by the social groups which they belong (West & Turner, 2004, p.462). Social groups largely represent specific cultures and these traits create ideologies to live by. For example, in the rap and hip-hop culture, the relationship with the police is frowned upon. This ideology has been expressed in music lyrics throughout the history of the genre from groups like Public Enemy and N.W.A to newer artists including Kendrick Lamar and The Migos. Hip-hop was created by minority communities in urban areas of the United States to act as the voice of minority communities, therefore, it culturally impacts minority communities especially with youth. The artists represent parts of black culture because they are the voices of "the culture." The culture, in this instance, represents hip-hop, music, fashion, and a behavior from the youth, more specifically, minorities. Hip-hop started out in the inner cities of New York with rap and B-Boying, but when it became commercial by the 1980s, it was recognized to be the narrative of the black experience. Black youth relate their identity in the world to hip-hop. In the Hip-Hop Nation not

only is black the racial standard, but normalcy is even more explicitly defined by overt masculinity (Muhammad, 2015 p.433). Muhammad (2015) argues that this is due to the fact that black men have not had many forums where they can express their masculinity in unadulterated terms. This point is supported academically (Majors, 2001; Weitzer & Kubrin, 2009) and expressed in rap music. The two perspectives shown in the film will come from that of a black male that depicts hip-hop culture, and a white male that depicts the justification of police culture. The police force in the United States have historically had negative relationships most profoundly with black communities. Actions considered as police brutality and crimes against these communities are voiced through protests and hip hop music. There have been many occasions including, but not limited to, the Rodney King altercation in 1991 caught on camera. The shooting of Oscar Grant in New York in 2009, the death of Eric Gardner in 2014, the shooting of Ferguson teen Michael Brown in 2014, and the shooting of unarmed teen Tamir Rice in 2014, have been the point of conversation in rap songs. These events, and protests to these situations, have ultimately caused outrage and fear and created groups to organize for justice specifically the efforts of Black Lives Matter. Thus from this standpoint, police or law enforcement have acted as the antagonist to the black American story.

To balance the conversation of law enforcement's relationship with black communities, there has to be an argument that recognizes the point of view of police. It can be easy for a black individual to live by the narrative that police do not care about black people based on the overwhelming evidence previously discussed. However, in order for progress in the form of communication, there has to be a balance of empathy between the two cultures. Law enforcement will always be held to a higher standard than civilians when it comes to job capability. Officers have more authority in their daily routines, than most other

having the responsibility to uphold the law, keep the peace, and, “protect and serve.” The police are involved in situations to establish authority as well as to calm a situation down (throughthemediacurrent, 2011).

In an interview discussing the nonverbal communication in law enforcement, Dr. Kempa (2011) says that the police are trained to show not aggressiveness, but strength and capability. Therefore, from the standpoint of an officer, it is their duty to use their given and perceived authority to deescalate any situation. It is also important to understand that their profession takes immense training and diligence. This idea comes from an officer in a recorded sit down between Black Live Matter members and law enforcement in a YouTube forum by Jubilee. Jubilee, “exists to bridge people together and inspire love through compelling stories. We create shareable human-centric videos that create connection, challenge assumptions, and touch the soul” (Jubilee, 2018). In the discussion, one of the officers argues that as an officer, he fears for his life every time he puts on his uniform and leaves his family behind to do his job. Another officer claimed that when she pulls someone over, she puts her hand print on the back or side of the vehicle in case something happens to her, they can trace her prints to that car. However, they do allude to the understanding of their power and control in their situations. This does not take away from the fact that there are many situations that do go awry, but points to the fact that an officer’s training provides a guideline on how to approach situations in general but does not approach this training from a cultural training aspect. The female officer, surprisingly, supported the efforts of The Black Lives Matter movement, she recognized what she could do in certain situations that showed empathy towards people of color and their communities. She wished that police training was not just looking at slides and watching

videos, but having full on discourse with the communities that they are patrolling (2018). Patel (2016) argues that community engagement plays a significant role in police reform. Community engagement permits the parties to acknowledge the importance of community trust and police departments to strengthen relationships with community members (Patel, S.2016). Police and the communities that they serve should both rely on one another to hold themselves accountable for their actions and behaviors.

Despite this, diverse communities do not see police the same, and racial diversities can be taken for granted in neighborhoods. Race plays a role in the different reaction to protest of police violence. There are large differences shown by recent statistics done by Reinka & Leach (2017). Almost three times as many White respondents (52 percent) had faith in the investigations into Michael Brown's death than did Black respondents (18 percent). When the verdicts were passed, only 10 percent and 2 percent of Black respondents supported the decision not to indict the police killers of Michael Brown or Eric Garner, respectively; contrastingly, many more Whites than Blacks said that the decision to not charge the officers was correct in the deaths of both Michael Brown (64 percent) and Eric Garner (28 percent) (Reinka & Leach, 2017). From these statistics, it can be concluded that police behaviors are not only overwhelmingly supported by whites as opposed to blacks, but it also provides a sense of security to reinforce their actions.

Standpoint Theory is embraced as a discussion leading into feminist movement and feminist theories, however, it very much applies to minorities and ethnic groups as well. Standpoint Theory is about criticizing the status quo because of the power structure of dominance and oppression (West & Turner, 2004, p.462). Just as the woman's experience of oppression by men, The African American experience equally show the relationship of



dominance and oppression. The Standpoint Theorist Julia T. Wood (1994) suggests that a standpoint approach is practical to the extent that it generates an effective critique of unjust practices. In her article, Woods uses the point of view from a woman as it fits the argument. From the perspective of this film, it is shown from Trey's fear of police as a black man and also Daniel's response to Trey as they both have a discourse of perceptions of the police.

In *Cognitive Dissonance* the Standpoint Theory fits the argument because the film is from the perspective of a minority engaging with an authority figure. Both Trey and Officer Daniel have an understanding that Daniel has the authority in the situation because he is a police officer. Also, since Daniel portrays the authority figure, he should not be seen as the antagonist. They are in a sense, similar, in fact this is how they bond in the end of the film; they are both fathers and they both like basketball. Sandra Harding (1991) says, "the social group that gets the chance to define the important problematics, concepts, assumptions, and hypotheses in a field will end up leaving its social fingerprints on the picture of the world that emerges from the results of that field research process" (Harding, 1991). The power of social groups relies in their narrative but more so, where they fit themselves compared to the world. Representation in this way is important because of who is doing the narrating and why. For example, if a rapper, who has fans identifying themselves through his or her music, has a negative run in with a police officer, they may speak about it in a song and force the narrative of their experience on to their listeners. In contrast, a person from outside of the social group who may empathize with police may feel as if the police in this situation is being unjustly targeted for doing their job and would criticize the artist for abusing their platform to spread hateful messages. This in itself can cause a discourse, on both sides of the argument, there is a point to be made. Although opinionated and based on personal perspective, both parties would

feel as if they are the victim of each other's narrative. In this argument, Standpoint Theory would align with the party that is falls victim to oppression. West & Turner, (2004) argue that Standpoint Theory points to the problems in insocial order. Once the problem is agreed upon, social order can come about. The issue with this is, the problem has yet to be agreed upon. Therefore, there has to be a dialogue to come to this conclusion and then social order can be built from this foundation. Standpoint Theory in this film acts as the framework of a bigger problem in society. The views and dialogue of this film are to gain and introduce an empathetic understanding of people by tripping away culture, job positions, race, authority, age, and all the layers that make us diverse to create a starting point of conversation.

## CULTURE

*Cognitive Dissonance* uses Standpoint Theory to recognize cultural perspective from the narrative of Trey and Daniel. From the beginning of the film the audience is introduced to Trey, his culture and his ideologies, and Daniel's police culture and ideology. Culture is a theory the film uses to create depth in characters, but it is also used to identify differences.

Culture is best suited to describe social groups because they share the similar meaning of culture. Culture can be understood as social groups, for example when people refer to "black culture", more than likely it is in reference to specific black social groups. The connection of culture to social groups is an important analysis because someone who does not understand what a social group is by definition, will describe culture as such. In my personal revelation, when attempting to take on the task of describing black culture, I find myself naming things that can be stereotypically "black." By that, I continuously incorporate Hip-hop and rap, food choice, religion, African American Vernacular English or ebonics, and lifestyle choices. I refer back to my experiences as the black experience because I am black. However, this is only my experience. Sharing this perspective or view of the world would be a social group because conversations share and understand these experiences. Culture adds to this because the traditions of this social group pass down the narrative and ideologies that creates the culture. Culture is a mainstay in recognizing how one establishes themselves in a world view. It is something that connects people to certain ideas and understandings, so when the conversation of culture arises, it encompasses a multitude of shared ideologies.

Communication is the way that the message from social groups creates cultures. The means of communication messages often alter the root of the messages. In the traditional

sense, communication has grown in the form of word of mouth and throughout time, the methods of media have progressed from newspapers, to radio, to film, to television, to digital means with email then social media. These platforms all make up Mass Media. Mass Media is communication and the process in which this field has formed its communication style has given an outlet to perceived cultural narratives. In fact, culture in the United States relies heavily on media. Baran & Davis (2003) conclude that “the media have become a primary means by which many of us experience or learn about many aspects of the world around us” (p.215). Understandably, how media represents individuals, communities, social groups, and cultures leaves a lasting impression. Hall (1981) declared that the media are powerful tools of the elite. A huge example of this is seen in politics. Politics rely heavily on mass media to get their ideologies and campaign messages out. Both the presidential elections of 2008, and 2016, relied heavily on marketing through media. Barack Obama and Donald Trump utilized the cultures of their targeted demographics to gain support. With Barack it was a message of hope with the slogan “Yes we can”. For Trump it was the message of America first with the slogan, “Make America Great Again”. When media outlets show specific cultures as characters in films, television shows, music videos, or on the news, this is how they are perceived to audiences. In many media spaces that are not deemed specifically for black entertainment, the black representation is most often offbase, or safe. Police on the other hand, are portrayed as rogue, gun slinging bad asses that will do what it takes to get the job done, even if it means blurring the line of right and wrong. Ultimately, solving the crime is more important than staying within the boundaries and rules given by justice system and their authority.

Media, for culture, is like a window to what the world looks like. In this project, film will act out culture through the main characters. The audience will get an understanding of

both Trey and Daniel based on their actions, how they talk, and what they talk about. This film will more so communicate the differences in cultures and how they both play a role in each other's lives. The narrative of communication between black communities and police are based on understandings of each other's culture in how it has been represented in media. Although this is not a satirical film, it serves as a view of how both cultures that have been regularly targeted in media outlets can connect through communication.

## **CROSS CULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

This film communicates two aspects of cross cultural communication. The first being the film itself, the second being the communication between black youth and the police. The idea of Cross Cultural Communication Theory is to provide the platform to hear from two different cultures in order to gain an understanding from both cultures to move toward a shared goal. Popan(2015) noted it is used to describe a spectrum of interactions, communication processes, and conflicts that appear in a system or social context made up of individuals coming from different cultures. The idea of this film is to give an example of cross cultural communication outside of businesses and institutional training. In this instance, not only does cross cultural communication portray the values of one person in a community, and his understandings, but it also narrates one representation of a nontraditional means of culture by portraying an officer with the values of police culture. Therefore, this film acts as a means of communicating two cultural messages, one from a black male's perspective and the other from a white officer's understanding of duty. There are many examples of successful outcomes to this means of communication and what it does is show to that both cultures are important and they need each other to succeed in accomplishing their goal.

One use of film as a communication method that has not been explored is its purpose as a means of Cross Cultural Communication Theory. In media, as stated previously, cultures are portrayed through the archetypes of the characters on screen. However, film has never been introduced with the purpose of Cross Cultural Communication Theory in an educational sense dealing with these two specific cultures. When used, cross cultural studies have examined the extent of marketing and advertising. In one example, Sharma and Kaur (2018) conducted research to compare US and Korean groups response patterns to advertisements.

The goal of the research was to show how these two cultures respond emotionally to different advertisements. They found that United States and Korean groups respond emotionally different to the advertisements but the attitudes towards the advertisement were not significantly different. How this translates to the cultures in this film is that two cultures can be introduced to an artifact or concept, can feel differently about it, but the attitude towards it will not be significantly different. First, in using this understanding in the perspective of the audience to the film, it will compare the feelings of the film from the target audience to the general audience. This means the audience will feel differently about the topic of the film, however, the attitude towards it will not differ by much. The attitude being that there has to be some change. Secondly, in terms of the message in the film, and the dialogue between Trey and Daniel, their character development revolves around their emotional response and their attitudes. Trey is angry at the events taking place, feeling as if his outcome will resemble those who look like him. Daniel is more so frustrated at response from Trey, not because of what he said, but because it makes him step back and question the criteria of being a police officer and the culture of being a police officer. However, similarly to the audience, both realize there has to be a change.

Cross Cultural Communication Theory is attempting to understand language, the different linguistic, religious, social, ethnic and educational backgrounds of two cultures (Popan, 2015). Applying this understanding to the film, based on the confrontation in the last act, Trey and Daniel are trying to see each other's point of view giving the opportunity for one another to speak their truth. Much of what both Trey and Daniel are saying aligns with the cultures that they represent. The audience will gain an understanding of both of the cultures that are portrayed on screen through the characters' dialogue. This allows more dialogue outside of the

film dealing with the real issues that are discussed in the film. What should be understood in this project is the dire need for constant communication between both cultures and active communication between communities and the law enforcement that police them. In this dialogue, both parties must understand their own issues as well as the issues with one another because ultimately they want the same thing which is understanding from one another. This film is an attempt to bring two cultures together to make progress. This film should pave the way for more films to be created in this vein with the idea that its concept will be used in film, and in television to create a new narrative of the representation in media of their relationships between the two communities. Much like research, the main conflict in this film can be expanded upon and explored further in other media platforms.



## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this film is to give an example of using cross communication as a method of discourse in the conversation of police brutality. The foundation of the conversation begins with Standpoint Theory at the center of the argument. It is important to first understand the background of black culture, or more precisely, urban black culture. For this argument, it is also important to distinct “urban black culture” as a type of black culture and not encompass an entire race under one umbrella. In fact, one argument of this thesis film is to understand, then prevent, stereotyping a race or profession.

Standpoint Theory is the basis to deconstruct the issue of communication in some black communities, their culture, and their negative perception of law enforcement. The root of this issue is cultural representation. The film will show Standpoint Theory from the perspective Trey has built from his fear of the police, it will also show the perspective of Daniel as an Officer. Daniel’s perspective should not be viewed as defense to the killings of unarmed black men in America. It should, however, be viewed as one narrative of someone who feels misunderstood as a police officer attempting to do his job and the right thing.

In the course of understanding these two main characters and their ideologies, Trey and Daniel both have important conversations that forms the grounds of their beliefs going into their interaction. Setting this up in the film adds value to the discussion so that neither argument is written off by assumption or stereotypes. Their dialogue in the third act is an example of cross cultural communication and is the purpose of the film.

## **TREATMENT**

Title: Cognitive Dissonance

Author: Henry Mahome

Treatment By: Henry Mahome

Logline:

In the Aftermath of a police shooting, a young black man comes face to face with a police officer to discuss their differences. Cognitive Dissonance

Treatment:

Heavy panting and the sound of running builds on screen as faded screams of authority can be heard in the distance. This is interrupted by a gunshot, the television is blaring, and the sound of sizzling bacon fills the room, TREY, an aspiring rapper in his early 20s, wakes up and begins his day rolling out of bed. Groggy, he walks to the kitchen where MO', Trey's significant other, is cooking, he walks to her and kisses her and begins to sit down. A Styrofoam plate is dropped in front of him. Nothing is said there is a mutual understanding between the two of them. As he looks for an eating utensil, he turns to a job application by his plate he looks up at her, she looks at him, and they have a brief dialogue about responsibility. He rushes to finish his breakfast and head toward the door. Before Mo' closes the door, Trey and Mo' have an intimate moment.

DANIEL is waking up in a cold small motel room, seemingly removed from everyone in his life. As he begins to pull himself out of bed he sits up to make a phone call to no prevail. He is sent to voicemail. He then slowly gets up washes his face and grabs his things for work. It is slowly revealed that he is a police officer. The scene ends with him walking out of the door. The scene opens with Trey and MIKE listening to a newly created

instrumental. Trey stumbles over his raps trying to think of new material. He cannot concentrate, but he is onto something he just cannot quite put it together yet. He is in a makeshift studio in Mike's, his best friend and producer, apartment. He is frustrated and tries to distract Mike with light conversation. Their conversation then turns dark as they begin to talk about Kane, how much he meant to the neighborhood and what he could have been. They begin to discuss police brutality and his relationship with his girlfriend and his career as a rapper. Mike gives him advice and with that, Trey decides it is time to take a walk. He tells Mike he is going for a walk, and with that he steps out of the house and heads up the street. As he is walking, he begins to take everything into consideration, his life, where it's headed, and most importantly his family.

This scene opens with an establishing shot of the police department. Daniel is in the locker room getting dressed. As he leaves LIEUTENANT WHELLS sees him and realizes how late he is. He Calls him into his office and they begin to argue about being monitored after the recent police shooting investigation of the department. Lieutenant Whells makes it clear that the department is under review and everyone is being watched pointing to Daniel's anger to keep his job.

Later that evening, Trey makes his way to the corner store to grab a drink and a snack. The corner store is known to be a hangout spot for many of the young guys in the neighborhood; they hang out in front of the store for hours at a time. Many of the kids in the neighborhood are gang related and come there after school. To the police, they look like they are up to no good, so they usually run them off. This day was different; there wasn't anyone in front of the store but Kasey. Kasey was a neighborhood kid, he wasn't the best or brightest kid but he was a good kid, he had a brother named Kane, they were twins. Kasey and Kane could not be more opposite, but they were best friends. Kane was the good child and Kasey was the delinquent.

Kasey was always into something he was curious about everything, so much so, he got tied up in things he had no business in. Kane always had a way of getting Kasey out of trouble. Kane was recently killed in a shooting involving the police and Kasey held on to that. It was on his face, cold and deep in thought, as Trey approached him Kasey looked up. He dapped him up, before he entered the store he stopped. As Trey is about to enter, he begins to think more about his son, and what would happen if he lost him the same way Kasey lost his brother. He decides to talk to him, maybe he can have some type of support. It seemed as if he did not have any. He begins to talk to Kasey asking him questions about life, school, girls, trying everything to avoid bringing up his brother. Kasey catches on quickly and begins to get frustrated. He tells him he knows what he is trying to do and that's not going to bring his brother back. At this point, the conversation starts to get serious. They begin to have a real conversation, the expression on Kasey's face begins to change and it looks like Trey just might be getting through to him.

As they are beginning to connect, the mood abruptly changes when a police car pulls up. A figure steps out of the car and without thought, both Trey and Kasey instinctively run opposite ways. That figure is Daniel. He begins to chase Trey, but he does not call it in. The thrill and adrenaline take over, overwhelm him to catch up to the suspect. Trey is in a panic, he must get home, he must get back to his girlfriend, he must get back to his son, he is desperate, and desperation causes mistakes. Trey runs making sharp turns, weaving through the neighborhood and in-between buildings, thinking he has lost him, and finds himself behind a building with no way out and Officer Daniel follows him in. Trey reaches a dead end, with nowhere to go he puts his hands up in defeat. FREEZE!! Daniel screams! With his gun drawn, he moves towards him and tells Trey to back up slowly. Hands in the sky Trey thinks the worst, he does not think he is going to make it. Frozen in

fear, Trey stands there the yells muffled to him. Daniel still screaming sees this as a threat, he is uncertain Trey is going to do something he does not risk it. A gunshot rings out BANG, and the screen goes from color to black and white, then flashes white.

The atmosphere changes, with his hands still in the air, Trey's mood changes, his fear turns to anger. Daniel is still yelling for Trey to walk slowly back to him. Rather than walk backwards Trey turns around, with his hands up and does not move. He says "if imma die you gone' have to look me in my eyes". Daniel is frozen in dismay. His gun still pointed at Trey, he cannot move, he falls silent; Daniel is speechless. Trey realizes he has a unique opportunity, Daniel is still floored, He asked with nervousness in his voice, "why...why would I shoot you?"... "ain't that what y'all do! Ain't that why you followed me in here..." Trey begins to question policetactics when it comes to black people. He points out police shooting after police shooting, with a list of names that seems endless. Daniel still has his gun drawn, however, Trey's hands begin to drop. Daniel begins to think about what he is saying looking for a reason, looking for a response. "But you ran, why would you run if you were innocent," Trey responds, "the same reason you still got that gun in my face; Fear." Daniel slowly lowers his weapon, as Trey begins to explain himself, and his neighborhood. A back and forth begins between Daniel and Trey. They both have passionate arguments, Daniel about being an officer of the law, looking to always do the right thing and uphold the law, and Trey about his perspective and experience with the police and how he feels they treat them. He begins to talk about Kane and how he was shot down by, "one of yo Boys" and he questions the morals of the police and the abuse of power that he sees. Daniel defends the officer, he knows him and knows he is a good guy, has a family, a wife two daughters. Trey says, "Kane won't have any of that, he's dead, he was just a kid, he had his entire life..." he stops and begins to tear up a bit. Daniel empathizes with Trey, he begins to feel

guilt, as if it is his fault that a kid will not be able to grow up and experience life, it is his fault that his life was cut short. “Sounds like a good kid, I’m sorry.” Trey starts to tell him about his son, how he wants his son to grow up, be better than him, he asks Daniel if he has a kid. They have a moment, Daniel begins to think about his wife and his son.

Daniel is silent for a moment to bridge the gap between him and Trey. Trey is just a kid, and to put a gun to his face, for what? What was he expecting to find? Daniel has always felt he was doing the right thing he begins to explain what being a cop is like and separating that from his home life. He feels misunderstood not just by Trey but in general, his job takes a toll on the mind, body, and spirit. He says, “you see things, you see people change. You come into this job essentially to make the world better but it is not what you expect...”

Some time has passed and now they are both sitting side by side. Daniel acts out of character and is actually listening, he listens to Trey talk and it is insightful. He begins to see the pride and ambition in Trey as he talks about where he wants to go in life what he wants to do and how he plans on getting there. Daniel talks about his family and the force and as he reminisces, he begins to smile a bit. They both gain new perspectives on their cultures and realize they are more alike than they anticipated. As they are enjoying their newfound company, Trey’s pulls his leg back, hitting something. When he moves his foot, out rolls a Pepsi can. Trey grabs it, they both look at it and immediately begin to laugh at the irony.

END

## PRE-PRODUCTION

The pre-production stage of this project consumed more than a year of organization. The amount of research, writing, rewriting, hiring, organizing, and planning that took place amounted to the success of the film to make it fluid. Originally, this film was meant to be a satirical film full of humor that covered these important topics but in a way that was comical. The issue with this approach is that most often it can be taken out of context, although it seems like good content, this would be the wrong platform to do that. First, I wrote the story and built the narrative of the film before I introduced character names. The story adapted to what was feasible with no budget. With a budget, this film and story would be bigger, introduce more depth to characters and would be longer, however, no budget was allotted so the script and story had to adapt.

The characters in this film are created to portray archetypes of stereotypical black characters in modern sitcoms, and dramas. For instance, Trey, the main character, should be the black protagonist that is relatable to one in "hood dramas." Cain in *Menace II Society* (1993), Craig in *Friday* (1995), and Trey in *Boyz in The Hood* (1991) for example, all provide archetypes stemmed from a character that is a part of the conflict but has the mindset to want to get out of their respective neighborhoods and living conditions. Also, in a way, Trey is an extension of myself based on what I have learned from these films, in the dialogue and mindset of a black man trying to make it in a system not set up from him to win. Daniel on the other hand is created with the inspiration of a multitude of cop films. Films such as *Bullitt* (1968), *End of Watch* (2012), *Traffic* (2000), *Mystic River* (2003), and *Speed* (1994), portray the protagonist police officer with a dynamic background that influences their work in the line of duty. Also, influence from talking to officers from the San Angelo Police Department, not only

about what they do on the job, but their life outside of work with each other and their communities. Additionally, watching police interviews helped build a realistic personality for Daniel. All the information obtained about the police culture I received comprised from real conversations, countless hours of police interviews and documentaries, as well as the glamorized perspective from films and television. The supporting cast were created with the idea of a multitude of comedy and drama films in which would fit their specific characteristics. Each role had a place and their own framework that supported the idea of the two main characters' personality and the narrative.

Casting these characters was accomplished with the help of close friends and amateur actors wanting to gain more experience. The process took time finding people to fit the roles and working with their schedules between attempting rehearsals and shooting the film. With a small team, I was able to create flyers, network on social media, and gain some traction on campus. Ultimately, the process did not go as originally planned which took many changes and adapting to make the idea come to fruition. The first casting call was met with only three participants. One role was given to a member of the shooting team, and the other roles were given to close friends, most of whom had no prior acting experience. Throughout weeks of script reading, rewriting, and character coaching, the actors were able to identify with their roles and portray these characters on the film. Trying to scout locations was met with many obstacles. For instance, one location that was a major part of the film was destroyed by the city, so the shooting had to move to another location. Traveling also had its setbacks because two of the main actors lived three hours away and scene's locations had to be changed to accommodate them. Shooting dates were pushed back because of scheduling conflicts due to traveling from San Angelo to Dallas. In a matter of two months, I logged over 3,000 miles in travel. Getting the clothing and



designing the outfits for the characters was another obstacle I faced when it came to finding a police uniform. It is illegal to impersonate an officer, so finding a close to authentic uniform took ingenuity. I was able to obtain an older uniform shirt donated by the Angelo State University Police Department, however, the Police Chief requested I unstitch the patches from the shoulders in his office. The tie, belt, shoes, pants, badge, and name tag were all borrowed from the Angelo State Theatre Department.

After the initial shooting of the film, the original actor who portrayed Daniel was replaced due to scheduling conflicts. The replacement fit the dynamics of the character and portrayed the role more convincingly. His build, the way he looked and talked, were more convincing for the storytelling. Adjusting to this actor's availability allowed for the additional scenes to be added to complete the two characters' point of views from the script to on screen. Due to the time restraints, his uniform was purchased from the Halloween store and matched with equipment he provided himself such as his clothing before he changed into his uniform, the weapon he used as well as his utility belt that was used as part of the uniform. The pre-production stage set the ground works and was the hardest part but the most important part because it dealt with elements that were out of my control.

## **PRODUCTION**

Full production took four full days around the work schedules of the two main actors. The actors that portrayed Trey and Daniel lived in a city four hours away from the original shoot location and the rest of the crew. Shooting was based on scheduling and timing, but was able to be accomplished. The first day of initial shooting was for the scene between Trey and Mike in the studio. There was no budget other than what came directly from my pocket. There was no financing or grants that went into this project which is an accomplishment in itself. All of the equipment was my own purchased before the construction of the film, as well as in-kind equipment from the Department of Communication and Mass Media at Angelo State University.

The equipment that was used for filming was a Sony A6300 body, three Canon lenses, a 50 mm prime, a 17 – 75mm lens, and a 55 – 300mm lens. To use these lenses, it took an E-mount adapter to make the Canon lenses functional on the Sony body. These specific lenses helped build scenes as I was able to utilize the smaller lenses to shoot wider shots. For example, the 17 – 75mm lens was used to create establishing shots capturing the entire environment in frame of the camera. The 50mm prime lens was used to make more personal shots like medium shots, close up shots, over the shoulders, of the characters to capture the emotions and facial expressions in the dialogue and body language. Finally, the 55-300mm was used for transition shots and close ups and scene setting shots. This lens was used for wider shots to get the characters in the frame and for close ups. This was a more dynamic lens to use to make the film flow visually. Rather than setting the camera down on a tripod and letting the actors move about, having a dynamic lens opened up the range with a moving frame to feel as if the audience is a part of the action.

Trey and Mike scene – Shooting day 1&2:

Filming days 1 and 2 took place in San Angelo at Angelo Place Apartments, which served as Mike's studio. The scene of Trey and Mike took two days of shooting, set up was from June 8, 2018 between 9:30pm – Midnight. The focus was to get the close ups from Trey and Mike and their conversation. However, the actual footage used would be from day 2 of shooting. The secondary audio from the shoot for day 2 was compromised so the audio was used from the internal microphone in post-production. On day 2, shooting took place between 4:30 – 8:30. The shooting took longer than expected due to the actors learning the lines of their script. The actor used to play Mike was not the original actor assigned to the role so he had to learn his lines immediately. Day 2 was fully focused on getting the lines together and putting a natural cadence in the words to make them sound authentic dialogue. Shots of the establishing shots of the door and Trey leaving at the end of the scene were all shot that day during the dialogue rehearsals.

Trey and Mo' scene – Shooting day 3:

The third day of filming had been pushed back a few times due to scheduling conflicts, but on June 24, 2018, scenes with dialogue between Trey and Mo' as well as Trey and Kasey were shot respectfully. Day 3 of shooting took place in San Angelo, a close friend's home served as the set location for the opening scene and the Alon gas station across from Angelo State's student gym served the set for Trey and Kasey's scene. The bedroom, hallway, kitchen, and then the living room were all filmed in as part of the first scene. The scene between Trey and Mo' were scheduled for 4:30pm on June 24, 2018 the shoot began after the actress portraying Mo' arrived on set. The introduction scene and Mo's scene were shot as one. The introduction of Trey waking up was used as a tracking shot to introduce Mo'

and their dialogue together. That scene was shot three times for audio and visuals. A sound recorder attached to a boom was used for the audio and Sony Alpha 6300 used for visual. Lighting in these particular scenes came from majority natural light and two spot lights. There was no access to additional lighting kits on this particular shooting day but the lighting from the house sufficed.

Trey and Kasey scene – Shooting day 3:

The actor portraying Kasey in the final product was a fill in for the initial cast. To remain on schedule, he was asked to learn the role that day and play that part. It was originally set to begin shooting in the early evening but had to adjust for the weather and the equipment, but this worked in favor of the storytelling. Originally, it was planned to shoot on Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> at 8 pm, however it began to thunderstorm, so filming was pushed back a day. On Sunday, the goal was to begin shooting once the actor portraying Kasey became available, but it was so hot-over 100 degrees at the time - the camera being used would overheat to the point of shutting itself down. We began shooting at sunset after 8:30pm. We shot the corner store scene with the focus to capture the dialogue between Trey and Kasey. All the shots were medium shots to focus on the dialogue from their perspective angles. In this scene, Trey is advising Kasey on options on what he can do with his life since school is not an option for him. This is first shot over the shoulder of Kasey but is cut to a wider medium shot of them capturing Trey as a mentor and Kasey listening. The scene was shot in its entirety only stopping if the lines were forgotten.

At one point during filming, this scene, a police officer by the name of Joe Mata, assisted with capturing an integral moment in the film. His police lights were used to break up the conversation between Kasey and Trey. Mata happily assisted in what would have had to be

an addition in post-production. This was also the only shot of that scene where a longshot was used and it was needed to act as a set up to the transition to the very next scene. The focus was the handshake between Kasey and Trey it was an extreme close up to get the detail of the handshake but to also signify a bond, and the build up to the police lights as they ran. This is referred to in the last scene's dialogue as a turning point between Trey and Daniel.

Trey and Daniel scene – Shooting day 4:

The fourth day of filming took place in Dallas on Tuesday June 26, 2018, with the primary focus to film Daniel's scenes. It also served as a chance to capture B-roll to be used for the opening scene. While waiting for the actor portraying Daniel to get out of class, shots of areas in downtown Dallas were filmed, including police cars, the police memorial, buildings, street signs, and inner city civilians waiting for busses. Many of the shots were not used, but the ones that were acted as an establishing point to show where the film takes place. The final scene with Daniel and Trey became the most complicated during filming. The set location changed three times that evening, because the first time we were collectively opposed to leaving our cars in the nearby parking lot where they could not be watched. It took an hour to find the next location but we were immediately escorted off the premises.

Finally, the last scene location happened to be at a parking garage of a wildlife museum. This location was a perfect fit for the context of the scene and the focus of shooting to film all the final scenes at once. Shooting began at 8:30pm pushing into 9:00pm which includes the set-up time and walk through. The first shots filmed were Trey running and Daniel following behind him which introduced the final act. One camera was used initially so that shot was filmed three times from three angles, a long shot, and two medium close ups from two different angles. Daniel then comes into the frame stopping in focus behind the barrel of his gun. From that

point, the focus was to show the perspective from Trey as he has his hands in the air. The shot is literally a turning point as the camera is moved from a close up on Trey to a medium shot on Daniel.

There were some technical difficulties with this however because one hour into shooting, the initial camera died. A back up camera was used to try to finish the scene, but that camera died as well. As the third option, an iPhone 8 camera was used while the other two cameras charged. This took an hour away from the shooting time. The final scene was shot with the initial camera but rigged with a portable charger. The intention with these shots in this scene was to portray both characters trying to gain the upper hand while providing perspective and insight into their understandings of each other, and their respective cultures. The camera angles upwards to Trey when he is talking and Daniel when he is talking, to show power or authority in their monologues. Their dialogue is important but in some shots it is them listening with the other character talking in the distance to show the characters listening, and paying attention. Their facial expressions show their growth from fear, to anger, to empathy, until ultimately, they both let their guards down. Finally, they are shown as equals in the last shot with the camera fixed in a medium close shot with neither one above the other. They also have a handshake embrace similar to the handshake Trey has with Mike and later Kasey. This scene ends with the Pepsi bottle that rolls by Trey, he picks it up and they both look at it and laugh.

The use of the Pepsi bottle is a subtle, yet important satirical message that pokes fun at the marketing effort of Pepsi in 2017. Pepsi's marketing team came under fire after a political commercial they put out involving Kendall Jenner. In the commercial, there was a protest with angry young people of color and on the opposing side was a riot squad. The controversial commercial ends with Kendall Jenner stopping the riot by giving the officer a

Pepsi making everyone happy. Smith (2017) noted “If the Black Lives Matter movement were led by a 21-year-old white supermodel armed with a can of fizzy soda, then maybe everyone would just get along” ([www.nbcnews.com](http://www.nbcnews.com), 2017). The commercial received so much backlash especially on social media, as a result, Pepsi pulled the commercial and Kendall Jenner issued a full apology. The issue was the disconnection between the company and the issues, it came off to the audience that Pepsi tried to profit from the issues in the communities. It was important to add this element to the film as a nod to using communication rather than consumerism to bridge these gaps. The idea in this film from this scene is that cross cultural communication should not be sold by a brand, especially by brands who have no real connection to issues that are trying to be worked out.

During filming, the shot selections became the biggest focus in addressing the messages of the applied communication theories. In the first scene of dialogue, it shows the relationship between Trey and Mo’, the dynamics of their relationship, and his mindset vs hers. In the third scene, it shows the relationship between Trey and Mike, in this case, the power dynamics are shifted and Trey is subjected to listening to Mike. In the fourth scene, the power dynamic is shown between Daniel and Lieutenant Whells and it is clear who is in charge. Although Daniel is standing the entirety of the scene, Lieutenant Whells clearly has the authority in this scene. The communication power is shifted back to Trey in the scene outside the gas station, and although there are points where he has to listen to Kasey, the power is still shifted in his favor. In the final scene between Trey and Daniel, Trey tries to take control of the situation however, he finds himself going back and forth with Daniel. Each scene had two to three takes with different approaches to have a dynamic collection of shots for editing. Not all of the shots worked due to the actors not knowing or forgetting lines, imperfect camera angles or movements, and

equipment failure. Another important factor in the setup of the scenes were the lighting situations. I decided to shoot the last two scenes at the end of day in order to symbolize the sunset or the conclusion because it goes back to the idea that communication can end these types of systemic issues. It has also worked because of how hot it was during the days of filming.

The travel during and between the shooting made a difference in how some scenes were organized. No permits or permissions were required for the set locations, however, at the corner store scene, the manager did not mind filming on the outside of the building but would not allow filming or cameras in the store. That scene was altered to Trey and Kasey on the side of the store rather than going inside the store. The same message could be portrayed, it was just shot differently. The volunteers to help shoot this project made the shooting process a lot more manageable as they were attentive, fast, and followed directions.



## **POST PRODUCTION**

The post production phase included three aspects; the initial editing, the sound of the film, and organizing the color and the graphics. The editing portion of the film took the separate shots and made a story of them. The software used for editing was Adobe Premiere CC. This software allows complete non-linear editing and made the editing process smooth. There are many elements that went into editing, first being that the film had to be edited five different times, one time for the initial build of the content, the second with seeing what scenes best fit. Adding the three layers of audio, ambient sound, the dialogue, and the music under the film to make it flow.

All of the footage was saved directly on the hard drive I used for the majority of my work. However, because the file sizes are typically large, and there were so many, I had to use a separate hard drive to assist the editing process. The framework of the film was already storyboarded along with the shot list (Figure 1-4), so compiling the footage on Adobe Premiere was not difficult. However, it did take a long time to render, save, and export. The files work like layers so it had to be put together before color could be added to the film. Stacking multiple layers would cause the computer to freeze. It took time separating the cuts by the beats and laying them out on the timeline, constantly saving, and creating new sequences and working from that point on. After the initial edits happened and the storyline is put together and laid out, was saved and I began an entirely new project with the save sequences as one full sequence. From there, the ambient sounds and effects could be added in the places that it needed to be in the film such as the sound of Trey running or the gun shots.

The music and score for the film were created before the shooting began but was

produced after the script. Demario Hollie scored the film creating the music to fit the theme for the introduction, the transitions, and the end of the film. Background music for the film was created specifically to fit the theme of moments in certain scenes. In the introduction, the song “Kicks,” by Armani is played as the lyrics align with the mindset of Trey’s culture. The upbeat tempo of the song but gritty message in the lyrics works with the theme of the film. There are moments in the film where the characters are enjoying each other’s time and the music in the film work as the bridge to help narrate the seriousness but allow for the moments positivity. The music did not over power the narrative but guided and transitioned the film into certain key moments. For example, at the start of the scene, with Trey and Mike, the instrumental employed acts as the beat that they are working on while they are conversing. No licensing was needed for any of the music because it was created and approved by Hollie himself. The luxury of this made it possible to use the music as needed. Hollie read the script and created the instrumentals that fit accordingly. We employed Armani for the songs “Kicks” and “Black Boy Blues,” which was used in the end credits of the film, the music was original from the artist Armani who collaborated with Hollie and their company, Crack For The Ears.

Once the editing was complete, EFX, audio, and music it was time to apply color. This process allowed me to create the look and visual emotion of the film by adding depth with color tones. The Sony a6300 shoots in c-log which is a cinematic setting built into the camera that pulls additional color from the clips. It provided the opportunity to take this footage and have more creativity with color grading and tones in post-production. With Adobe Premiere, I was able to apply cinematic filters referred to as LUTs which give the shots a certain color dynamic, like Adobe Photoshop or Lightroom, the colors can be adjusted to my liking and be more personalized. With this freedom of personalization, the final product resembles a cinematic

experience. The color grading of the film took time and has three different edited versions with three different cinematic looks as far as color goes.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concept of *Cognitive Dissonance* is to create a conversation between two cultures introducing the concept of Cross Cultural Communication. First, is to establish that social groups and social environments make up the understanding cultures. Identifying both black youth and police officers' social groups as cultures can create the argument that their social interactions are Cross Cultural Communication. Second, is to explain that cultural codes, media, and the power media has on the perceptions of identity of culture. It is concluded that it is the media's responsibility to contextualize these cultural conversations and alter the representation of these groups' relationship with one another. Third, is to acknowledge the issue of perception of police culture in black communities that is created in part by cultural influencers and act accordingly. Lastly, is to not only have the conversation, but to act on them in a way that move toward a common goal.

Creating this film, and the entire creative thesis process, was an enriching academic experience. It was an opportunity to study a social issue I am passionate about and build a narrative and conversation. The journey of compiling the research to describe, in this social climate, makes this film that much more important and gives me reason to share it on multiple social platforms. For this, I have signed up to submit this film and script to film festivals and writing competitions to further the message in the film and to reach more audiences. The website [www.withoutabox.com](http://www.withoutabox.com), allows filmmakers to submit in a variety of contests and festivals with little to no submission fee, thus providing a greater opportunity for exposure and networking. I will be submitting *Cognitive Dissonance* to the following contests in the future.

## **FESTIVALS AND CATERGORIES**

Chain NYC Film Festival (August 06, 2018 to August 12, 2018)

- Narrative Short of First-Time Filmmakers Showcase

Short Live Action Narratives of DFK New Wave (April 12, 2019 to April 14, 2019)

- Short film
- Student Short Narrative

Urban Mediamakers Festival (October 11, 2018 to October 16, 2018)

- Short film
- Short film script

SR - Socially Relevant Film Festival New York (March 15, 2019 to March 21, 2019)

- Short film

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# Cognitive Dissonance

Screenplay by

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1. INT - TREY'S HOME DAY

Fade in

It's an abnormally hot day, the air is heavy. Two separate fans slice through the air in two separate rooms, back and forth it cuts between two similar living spaces. the camera transitions showing TREY laying but trying to get up, in a small bed in a small room. The camera moves through the room showing the congested space. The camera moves also showing a similar space, with a small bed this bed has DANIEL laying there. The scene synchronizes their movements as they get ready in similar fashion. In TREYS home, he is moved by the sound of sizzling grease from the kitchen.

MO'

Standing in front of the stove in their small kitchen a few steps away from the table. Slouched, she actively is moving her arms stirring and flipping making breakfast. Catches Trey slowly slide to the kitchen to sit down.

I found a few more places for you to look at today when you get the time. (Stops and thinks) Well actually I'ma' need you to make time. I got rent for this month but we gone be short on the phones. I can probably get an extension to cover us for a few more days but...

begins to scrape food on Trey's plate

TREY

.. I got it

MO'

But do you?

TREY

If I say I got it, I got it. I've been looking around but I gotta schedule time for the studio you know this. but I'mma figure something out

MO'

(Pauses with glare) Trey c'mon we don't have time this month or next month. Look, I want you to be successful, I do, but right now, how things are going, it's getting harder and harder for us...(dramatic pause) I need your help. We need your help.

TREY

I promise you its gone work, I got you look, (sigh) I'mma go check these out, I'mma see what's up and then I'mma head to the studio with MIKE. is that alright, is there anything else that you need me to do?

Trey begins to get up from the table scarfing his food down as he stands up. Mo' looks at him and shakes her head with a small smile, he has charmed her again starts to head out the door Mo' stops him.

MO'

hey, (intimately) Be careful don't do nothin' stupid. Everything is still a little crazy out there and I just don't want you getting caught up in no nonsense ok?

TREY

C'mon you know me better than that

MO'

yea, but I also know who you hang out with, birds of a feather right... (small laugh)

TREY

(laughs) yea yea yea whatever, (pause) I love you [kisses her on the cheek]

MO'

love you too stupid (smiling)

SHUTS DOOR

2. INT - DANIEL'S HOME - DAY  
(phone ringing in the background)

Daniel is starting his day. The apartment looks cold and lonely, messy with little effort put into it maintenance. (phone continues to ring with subtle teeth smacking and cussing). Camera cuts to him sitting on the edge of the bed with phone in his hands, with defeat on his face. He gets up grabs his shirt and heads out of the door

FADE TO BLACK

3. INT - MIKE'S STUDIO - DAY

Camera pans left slowly reviling Trey and MIKE in the makeshift home studio in Mike's living room. They are having a conversation about their daily hardships in life and where they want to be in life. Their conversation moves from music to the recent shooting. MIKE is having a hard time trying to keep him focused but their conversation opens up their relationship to their neighborhood and what they think is going on and how they feel they are being treated. (instrumental begins playing MIKE stops it, wanting feedback from TREY)

TREY  
this hoe hard...  
(receives phone alert)

"OFFICER ON PAID LEAVE AFTER KILLING A  
TEENAGER INFRONT OF LIQUOR STORE"  
damn...

MIKE  
what's good?

TREY  
You know the dude that shot Kane?

MIKE  
  
yea? wait naw let me guess, they  
let him go

TREY  
Paid!! like it never happened

MIKE  
damn...(dramatic pause)

TREY  
that shit crazy, did they have  
video footage ?

MIKE  
you know they did but what is that  
gone do, remember Philando Castile?  
had a full child in the car the  
whole thing was recorded by his  
girl! he wasn't even driving

TREY  
we can't keep putting these scared  
cops in our neighborhoods. you know  
when I was in school, I took this  
course on prejudice discrimination  
and stereotypes and we talked about  
how we get portrayed throughout  
history

MIKE  
what you mean?

TREY  
we have always been seen as  
aggressive and dangerous (say in  
quotations) ...

MIKE  
I mean know a few niggas that are  
aggressive and dangerous but I see  
what you saying though "laughs"

TREY  
(stares then starts to put  
headphones on) that shit ain't  
funny bro run the beat back.

MIKE  
ha bet from the top

Trey is in the booth but is having difficult putting lyrics  
to the beat. he stops to think and then tries to run the  
verse back, he has no focus. Mike can tell, but just before  
Trey tries to start again he gets distracted.

TREY  
bro I can't even think right now

MIKE  
something on your mind?

TREY

Yea, on the cool I ain't supposed to even be here right now

MIKE

(laughs) you set this studio time up

TREY

yea, without permission (nervously laughs) Mo' wants me to get a job. that's what I was supposed to be doin' today but I don't think she realize how important this is to me.

MIKE

(stops)awe man you ain't tell me that, Mo gone be on my ass if she find out. now I'm an accomplice. Damn dawg what you gone tell her, do not drag me into y'all mess.

TREY

you gone be aight fam, I won't tell her, but she act like I don't help out or nothing I do what I can but it's hard trying to balance both. Ain't no job out here going to really help us, working minimum wage I'mma have to work at least 40 hours a week and that still won't be enough.

MIKE

bro that's not an excuse, I got a job, it sucks, I hate it but it helps fund my side hustle. But you got your fam to worry about that's your main priority. working won't get in the way or at least it shouldn't and it's going to help in the long run, its goin to keep you out of trouble and that's what she tryin' to do (jokingly) keep yo ass outta trouble. look, between here, a job, your son, and your girl, you'll be plenty busy. But what you gotta do is be patient grind out for a bit that's all. take advantage of networking, you would be surprised at the people you meet and just how they can help you. everything happens for a reason.

TREY

(stops to think) ah I hate sayin' this, but you right

MIKE

..I'm

TREY

what you

MIKE

right

say it again bro this time in the mic' I gotta put that as my tag  
(echoes) mike, mike, mike, mike,  
you right, right, right, right  
(laughs)you ready?

TREY

(laughs)begins to take his headphones off and head to the door.

naw bro, imma go grab something from the store and come back. I cant really think right now so imma go clear my head for a bit.

MIKE

aight, cool aye while you at the store get me an Arizona an some

chips



TREY

bet

MIKE

ayo! and while you're out, come  
back with at least a 16 so you can  
lay something down when you get  
back. if you gone waste time might  
as well be productive

TREY

ha bet

TREY WALKS OUT OF  
DOOR

4. INT - POLICE STATION - DAY

Officer Daniel is coming in barely missing a mandatory meeting. the tension in the office is high due to the recent shooting involving one of his fellow officers. Many of the officers are on edge about their jobs and how their relationship with the officer involved in the shooting. As Daniel walks past the office of the lieutenant he puts his head down hoping he goes unnoticed. the lieutenant sees him and immediately stops his conversation and calls Daniel into his office.

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

Dan, Dan! Get in here

DANIEL

(sigh) yessir...

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

everything alright sir. we missed  
you this morning at the meeting

DANIEL

I was just running a little...

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

late, yes I know. (sighs) Dan  
C'mon, how's the wife and kid?

DANIEL

Sorry boss, it won't happen again

Daniel, frustrated knowing that the lieutenant knows what is going on and knows his situation at home with his family He gets up and heads to the door.

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

Sit down. There have been a lot of things going on here man and I need all of you guys to be aware of what's happening.

DANIEL

right

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

look I need to know that whatever goes on at homes stays there.

DANIEL

there won't be a problem ... sir

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

I don't need an attitude from you, Jake was a friend of mine too and I understand the situation he is in and we can't change the past. I have to talk to you all individually, it's protocol, but I don't want to make it more difficult than it has to be. please, sit down

DANIEL

I'm not Jake, I've been doing this for far too long I know how to do my job and I don't need to a babysitter or a shrink. Just let me do my job.

LIEUTENANT WHELLS

let me do mine. it's important that we make sure that you guys are stable enough...

DANIEL

Stable...stable? (angrily) do what you gotta do then

## LIEUTENANT WHELLS

I didn't mean it like that. but  
 this is serious. your anger problem  
 is serious. and we have a job to do  
 that relies on how you make  
 decisions. so I could give a damn  
 about how long you have been here  
 if you can't do your job. and it  
 starts with being here on time. you  
 can leave, there will be paperwork  
 on your desk.

Daniel angrily walks out of the office. rather than going to  
 his desks he goes to his squad car.

DANIEL MINUTES FROM  
 A BREAKDOWN STARTS  
 HIS CAR AND DECIDES  
 TO DRIVE

5. EXT. - CORNER STORE - END OF DAY/EVENING

Trey walks out of a building seemingly finishing what looks  
 to be an interview or job application process. he has taken  
 the advice of his friend and girlfriend who convinced him  
 to work on his music and have a job at the same time. while  
 music is his passion he is optimistic about the future and  
 how he will manage his time between his music, family, and  
 now work if he gets this job. with this new motivation and  
 energy, he is on his way back to the studio and remembers  
 that he needed to stop at the corner store to get snacks. He  
 sees KASEY sitting in front of the store and initially walks  
 by him uncertain of what to say. As he begins to open the  
 door to the store he stops and thinks realizing that KASEY  
 probably needs someone to talk to and a mentor. He closes  
 the door and turns to him to try and see if he can get  
 through to him.

TREY

what's good my guy  
 (daps up Kasey)

KASEY

what's good OG

TREY

(laughs) OG? I'm not that old

KASEY

you older than me

TREY

(laughs) oh true, you doin alright  
kid

KASEY

yea, I'm straight I guess

TREY

hey bro, I'm sorry 'bout what  
happened. (stumbling to find  
words) I just... you know... shit  
(sigh) your brother was a good kid  
Kasey

KASEY

yea I know, he was supposed to  
(stops) he was posed to go to  
college and actually do something

TREY

And you wasn't?

KASEY

you know how I get down, I ain't  
with that school shit that was him,  
he was all about them books.  
(whimpers) Fuckin pigs man they  
always cutting us down for nothin'.

TREY

yea man, (stops, sigh) damn man  
yea. so now what?

KASEY

fuck them bro, fuck him, we ain't  
safe out here, they ain't here to  
protect us, why why you think he  
ain't arrested! he was doin his  
job!? my brother dead, shot up and  
that clown out here on vacation  
what type of bullshit is that? fuck  
all them bro!

TREY

I can't even begin to understand  
that fam, that's some shit that  
nobody should have to go through  
but we black and we expect it, damn  
near anticipate it. you know my  
people we here for y'all man. You  
and ya' moms, all y'all got is each  
other now bro, but the community  
support you.

KASEY

no they don't, they know me. they  
might have supported my brother but  
they for damn sure ain't tryna help  
me out.

TREY

you gotta change that bro, I can't  
even believe I'm saying this but  
what if you went back to school or  
something?

KASEY

nigga no...

TREY

(laughs) thought I'd try, but if  
you give people a reason to care  
they are more inclined to care

KASEY

did you learn that in school?

TREY

you funny, I wanna help you bro  
for real for real though, I'm  
recording right now,

KASEY

yea that's right, you do be  
spittin' I think still got your  
first mixtape

TREY

you ever thought about like rapping  
or taking pictures or filming or  
something?

KASEY

sometimes I guess, I like cameras  
or whatever

TREY

aight cool bro that's what's up,  
say, look I know this dude, Sneaks  
he actually icey with a camera and  
I got this old camera I don't use  
no more I was gonna pawn, but I  
can get it to you and he could  
teach you how you use it. I am  
goin' to need a cameraman to shoot  
for me soon anyway

KASEY  
word? you'd do that?

TREY  
fasho, if you good I can pay you or  
whatever and you can start a lil  
biz

KASEY  
well I'mma need to go to school to  
start a business wont I?

TREY  
(smirks)

KASEY  
(laughs) aight fasho 'preciate it  
big bro

TREY  
ain't no thing fam (starts to hand  
him a \$20)

KASEY  
what's this for?

TREY  
I know it ain't really much, but  
run me one of those plates your  
moms sellin' by the studio later,  
and you can chop it up with me and  
Mike about working with us for a  
little bit

AS TREY HANDS KASEY  
THE TWENTY DOLLAR  
BILL, A COP CAR  
PULLS UP TO THE  
STORE

6. EXT. END OF DAY / EVENING

Instinctively both Trey and Kasey run their separate ways. As Daniel gets out of the car he notices them running, and he acts. He begins to pursue Trey. Daniel doesn't call for help or back up and feels he can catch him and do his job. Trey cuts through building alley ways looking over his shoulder every step of the way. Daniel is close behind him almost keeping pace. After three blocks Trey finds himself turning into an abandoned building but there is no way out; he is stuck. Before he can turn around and get out he hears Daniel behind him drawing his weapon.

DANIEL  
FREEZE!! Don't move

TREY  
(hands in the air walking forward  
slowly) aight aight aight

DANIEL  
I said don't move

The camera cuts back to Trey standing in front of Daniel, still yelling (slow motion). Trey turns around with his hands still in the air and doesn't move. With anger in his eyes ready to be shot, if he has to, he stands there with his chin in the air.

TREY  
If I'mma Die, You you gone' kill me,  
you gone have to look me in my eyes  
to do it

Daniel is frozen in dismay and for a second speechless

DANIEL  
(confused) why ... why would I...

TREY  
ain't that what y'all do right?  
ain't that why you chased me in  
here

DANIEL  
no I ...

TREY  
(slowly putting hands down) I'm  
tired of always being the bad guy.  
I'm tired of having to run for my  
life from y'all livin' on edge not  
knowin' if today my day when I  
ain't do shit

DANIEL  
sir! calm down just wait...

TREY  
NO I'm not gone calm down bro, I  
don't have that luxury

DANIEL  
Son that's not how that works

TREY  
that is how that works, that's how  
it has always worked you see a  
black man instantly he a threat and  
you have to take him out.

DANIEL  
how are you innocent sir? Innocent  
people don't run!

TREY  
I have to

DANIEL  
(begins to get agitated) that's  
not a good excuse Why would you run  
if you are innocent!!

TREY  
the same reason you still got that  
gun pointed in my face!

There is silence between the both of them no one moves. it  
would seem that Trey has the upper hand verbally but Officer  
Daniel is not going to back down.

DANIEL  
Do you know what a police officer  
is son? do you understand what a  
police officer has to go through  
night in and night out to keep  
folks like you safe. just so you  
can complain about us. Being an  
officer of the law is a thankless  
job. the reason why I got into this  
job is to protect the people who  
need to be protected

TREY  
from me right!?

DANIEL  
I don't know? you ran. if you were  
innocent you wouldn't have run. I  
don't know any innocent people who  
run at the sight of police.

TREY  
then you don't know no black people  
then.



DANIEL

so I guess all cops are racist then  
huh? (slowly starts to lower gun)

TREY

this shit happens way to often to  
be coincidence. Sandra Bland,  
Freddy Grey, (whisper) Kane...  
Kane. Kane Bradley... he was a good  
little dude man. Straight A  
student, funny wanted to do  
something wanted to be somebody  
man. He didn't run, how can you  
expect anyone, let alone a whole  
people who have seen how y'all  
treat us, to not respond a certain  
way? I gotta son man. I want him to  
grow up and not have to worry  
about fearing for his life when he  
see the police. I don't want to  
get a call when he is 15 saying  
some cop was scared and put 15  
shots in my son for being black. I  
don't think you understand that

DANIEL

what's your name son...

TREY

(takes deep breath) Trey ... Sir

DANIEL

sir? ok well I'm Offi...(holsters  
his gun) I'm Daniel and man I'm  
sorry. you shouldn't think that  
cops are bad people. we are the  
good guys for the majority of us we  
are here for you man. yea there are  
some bad ones but there are some  
bad people everywhere. there are  
always going to be a small few that  
abuse their power and  
unfortunately that's who the  
spotlight is on.

TREY

do y'all even hold each other  
responsible? it seems like every  
time some black kid gets shot one  
of y'all get paid vacation

DANIEL  
that's not how it works

TREY  
how does it work then?

DANIEL  
it's a longer process than what you  
hear or see on T.V we do hold each  
other responsible every single day  
but that doesn't mean bad shit  
doesn't happen. people make  
mistakes, we make mistakes too; we  
are human

TREY  
but y'all are humans who have the  
power to take a life and get away  
with it

DANIEL  
you are only seeing what you want  
to see. you are only seeing us from  
one perspective

TREY  
I'm black man, that's the only  
perspective I know! why do I have  
to feel like the villain every  
time I see y'all

DANIEL  
why do I have to be the boogie man  
every time you see me? do you  
think we plan out how many black  
people we want to hunt every day?  
hell no we just want everyone to  
be safe

TREY  
what if we don't feel safe with you  
here, how do you fix that? scared  
to call y'all when we really need  
you cuz we really scared of y'all!

DANIEL

to be honest we are scared too.  
Everyday. Not of you, but every day  
we do a job that requires quick  
life or death decisions and that is  
scary. if I'm scared of you and you  
are scared of me how can I help  
you? how can we ever help each  
other?

TREY

we just gone be running in circles  
then

DANIEL

we shouldn't have to, I think we  
can come to some kind of middle  
ground right as humans, as men

TREY

if that's the case you will have to  
see me as me. and the fact is, you  
don't know me and I don't know you  
you don't know shit about me and I  
don't know shit about you. all you  
can do is judge me based on what  
you see, and if you don't like what  
you see or see me as a threat  
because of the clothes I like to  
wear or the way I talk or the way I  
walk the music I listen to...

DANIEL

man to man, I hear you, man to man  
I understand ... I can't even say  
that cause I'm not black and I  
don't know what it is like to be  
black in a time like this, but I am  
a father and at the end of the day  
I would do whatever it takes to  
make sure my son is safe and has a  
better life than me. I hear you  
loud and clear and there are things  
that need to change and we are  
working on it first hand, I can  
tell you we are working on it.

7. INT. - BUILDING - END OF DAY

Officer Daniel has put his gun away. they are still in the  
building but rather a conversation between superior and

subordinate, they begin a dialogue between two men finding common ground. Daniel looks around and then sits on a crackly bench holding up the wall, he looks at Trey and Trey, not confident that nothing will happen to him, plops down next to him. Trey takes a deep breath.

TREY  
what's your kid's name?

DANIEL  
Michael ... Mikey

TREY  
(pulls out a picture) this my  
little mans love him to death

DANIEL  
how old is he

TREY  
four, he is something special

DANIEL  
(opens up wallet) here is mine

TREY  
ok I see you with the jays little  
dude. is that why his name is Mike

DANIEL  
(laughs) well that's part of it.  
Mike is a good name and just so  
happens to be shared with the  
greatest basketball player ever

TREY  
man hold up, Lebron is the greatest

DANIEL  
dude are you kidding me Michael  
Jeffery Jordan would bust Lebrons  
ass on any end of the court that he  
played on. He played with dogs and  
was top dog. 90's basketball was  
way different than today.

TREY  
I love Mike man but come on lets be  
real he not stopping Bron he a  
beast 33 and still the best player  
in the league by far

DANIEL  
(laughs) that should tell you  
something about the league today  
then huh

TREY  
(laughs) I'm training my kid right  
now putting a hoop in his room and  
everything he gone be col-

DANIEL  
-thank you

TREY  
for what?

DANIEL  
talking to me

TREY  
did I really have a choice?

DANIEL  
yea... you always have a choice

TREY  
you're not a bad guy man I think we  
have to have more conversations.  
not like this, but I mean like more  
of us, talking with more of y'all

Daniel puts his hand out to shake, hesitant Trey also  
extends his hand out they begin to shake but it turns into a  
dap. they sit there for a bit a sign of relief and a moment  
of calmness. As they are sitting, Trey kicks his feet  
backwards as the camera pulls out a Pepsi can rolls into  
both of their sight they both look at it. Trey picks it up  
and hands it to Daniel. They both laugh

FADE TO BLACK

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Henry Mahome III was born on April 22, 1994 in San Antonio, Texas. His parents are Henry Mahome Jr. and Annazette Williams. He and his twin brother Marsalis Mahome are the youngest of five siblings. All of his childhood, He lived in San Antonio Texas but traveled at least once a year around or outside of the country to visit family.

Henry graduated from Holmes High School in San Antonio in 2012. That fall, he was admitted to Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas. From 2012 to 2016, he was heavily involved in student groups, held a multitude of jobs including two in the department of Communications as a student writer for Ram Page, the student newspaper, and Ramtv, the locally broadcasted student television network. He became known amongst his peers for his two passions; film and sneakers. He filmed small projects for student organizations, musicians, and small local business. It was clear that he wanted a career in production and film. He began filming under the title Yosneakpeeks, a nod towards his love for sneakers and film. In 2016 he received his bachelor's degree in arts with his major in mass media concentrating in film studies. He was accepted into the graduate program of the Department of Communications at Angelo State University. Rather than going the traditional route of comprehension exams, he chose to do a creative thesis. His thesis combined research and a Narrative film which tied communication theories and real-world social issues. As a graduate student, he conducted research on cultures and understanding perspectives of said cultures. He practiced both qualitative and quantitative research methods, studied multimedia storytelling, media law, and race, gender and the media. Henry will complete the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Communications in the Fall of 2018